

Bringing home and Bonding with Your Mittenstar Kitten: Safety, Supervision, and Creating a Lasting Connection

Part of my job is helping guide our kitten families on how to bring their new kitten home and set them up for success. **Please, and I cannot stress this enough—set up a kitten room!**

Your kitten needs a safe, kitten-proofed space for at least the first 60 days, and they should not have access to the whole house until they're at least 6 months old. Unfortunately, when families didn't follow this advice and let their kitten roam freely in high-traffic areas too soon, things didn't go well. However, once the kitten had their own room, these problems were quickly resolved. We've even had two sad instances where kittens were hurt from being given too much freedom too early. So, if nothing else, please make sure your kitten has a safe, secure room where they can spend most of their time, especially if you'll be away or unable to supervise them directly. **At this age, even the sweetest Ragdoll kitten will prioritize exploring and playing over snuggling. They'll completely forget you exist if overwhelmed with new places to climb and explore!**

So! This process not only keeps them safe but also helps with bonding and socialization in a very critical way.

How to Set Up a 'Kitten Room', and Bond with Your Kitten

1. Pick a Suitable Room to Kitten-Proof.

Set up a cozy, kitten-proofed room like a bedroom, office, or large bathroom with food, water, a litter box, a cat tree/scratching post, and a comfy spot for you to sit and spend lots of time with your kitten. **This space will be their "home" for the first months, where they will be safe and secure.** It's also important that you'll be comfortable spending time with them here! If you're open to it, let them sleep with you for at least the first week—it can be a key part of developing a close bond. I know some people are light sleepers and may not want the kitten in their room after this, it's totally fine to kitten proof a secondary 'night time' room (many people may have their bedroom or an office set up for the kitten primarily, and then also set up a bathroom for the kitten to go into for bedtime only). If you choose to keep your kitten in your bedroom all the time they absolutely will come to love sleeping with you!

2. Isolate your kitten for the first 7 days

Keep them separated from other pets during this time to help them adjust and prevent illness. Do not wear shoes from outside in this room. Wash your hands and arms thoroughly before coming in to hang out with your kitten.

3. Supervise their time outside the kitten-proofed area

Only allow them out under direct supervision for the first 60 days to avoid accidents and ensure safety.

4. **Spend regular time with your kitten**

Sit with your kitten often to build trust and affection. Engage with them while doing daily activities—read a book, watch TV, or simply hang out in their room. Your presence is key to bonding.

5. **Feed them by hand or in your lap/while being held**

For the first week, try feeding them directly from your hand or on your lap to strengthen the bond through positive associations. Have a 'treat jar' set up somewhere special, and carry them to it and hold them while you give them the ultra special treat.

6. **Carry them around the house**

After a few days, take them with you to explore the house while holding them. This teaches them that being held is positive! I say this multiple times because it really is so good for bonding. Even after the initial walk through! My adult cats love being held on my hip while I stir things on the stove, or while I'm going from room to room, I always try to show them something out the window, or something on the ledge they don't normally see, things like that just to actively maintain these bonds with them. :)

7. **Play with Them Often (But mix it up!)**

Playing with you by using toys and chasing things like wands, springs, and catnip mice is essential to work out all that excess kitten energy and having fun like this is great for bonding, but avoid making it the only focus of your time together. Too much play can actually lead to hyperactivity! Mix playtime with petting, holding, and praise to balance their energy and affection. Let them "catch" toys during play and follow up with lots of positive reinforcement. Cats love being told they are a good boy or a good girl and being pet along their back, head, and chest in between catching their toys just as much as dogs do!

8. **Introduce other pets gradually**

Wait until your kitten is comfortable and settled before introducing them to other pets, and do it slowly to ensure a positive experience.

9. **Use "time outs" to reinforce good behavior**

When needed after kitten begins to spend time out in the main house with you, place them back in their kitten-proofed room when they engage in bad behavior to teach them boundaries. If they go on the counters or kitchen table? Say 'no!' firmly, and shoo them off. If they go up again, put them back in their room for the entire day - not just a few minutes. You can do this with anything naughty, from climbing on curtains, getting into things they shouldn't, etc - any bad behavior should be corrected or told 'no' once, and after that it is back to their kitten room. THIS IS NOT MEAN and it's not meant to be something where they are 'punished' - It helps kitten learn that being part of the house requires good kitten manners, and prevents the stories you hear of nightmare cats that terrorize the house with their antics and counter climbing. View it more as setting a

boundary than as a discipline or punishment - never yell at your cat or hit them!

10. **Expect Crying—It's a Good Thing!**

As your kitten becomes more familiar with their room, they might start crying to be let out—and believe it or not, this is a good sign! I know it might feel a bit heart-wrenching, but remember, you want to be the most exciting part of your kitten's life, especially during those first few weeks. As time goes on and they get used to their "new" room, they'll naturally start feeling bored after exploring every corner. Or, if you've put them back in their room for a time-out after some naughty behavior, they might cry to come out.

While it can be tough to hear, don't give in too quickly! Your kitten won't resent you for leaving them in their room for a while, as long as you're spending quality time with them otherwise. The crying is actually a positive sign—it means they love and miss you, and they'll be thrilled to see you when you come back to spend time with them. This anticipation helps build a strong bond between you and your kitten, so embrace it as part of the bonding process!

11. **The first week:**

For the first week, it's important to keep your kitten in their room 24/7. Don't let them out at all during this time. By the end of the week, they'll start crying when you leave, and once again, this is a great sign! When you come back to snuggle or sit with them, they'll be eager for your attention and affection. This process is essential for long-term bonding.

If your kitten doesn't have the chance to get bored in their room, they'll likely be more focused on exploring new spaces than bonding with you. By providing them a dedicated space to settle into and even get a little bored in, you make yourself the center of their attention when you're there.

So, while you're in their room, take the opportunity to bond. Sit with them during meals, feed them by hand, and spend quality time playing, holding, and talking to them. You can even watch TV, read a book, or work on your phone or laptop while in their space. If you have kids, encourage them to spend time in the room too, doing their homework or playing or even watching things on a tablet - your kitten will naturally want to be involved in whatever they're doing, or will come to sit in their laps and hang out.

A key part of bonding happens when you're in the room but not actively engaging with your kitten. When they start seeking out your attention, like hopping into your lap or nudging you with a headbutt - that's when you know the bond is growing. I often sit with our kittens while working on my laptop or by working social media on my phone, and after a little while, they'll come to me for attention, or they'll settle down near me or on me while I work. This behavior continues as they grow, leading them to seek snuggles and lap time even as adults.

If they aren't completely comfortable and bored in the room they're in - they will

rarely or never come to do this with you - they will always prioritize exploring and adventure over snuggling at this age, so this is why I stress having a room set up for them in this way.

It's important to balance active playtime with quiet moments where your kitten can initiate interaction. I'll even remove toys and distractions from our nursery / bedroom sometimes, so the kittens eventually get bored and come to me for attention - this is a great habit to encourage for a lifetime of affectionate bonding!

12. Hold and pick up your kitten frequently—up and down, up and down!

After the first week, your kitten will likely want to start exploring outside their kitten-proofed room.

This is the perfect time to carry them around the house!

Take them on "tours" of your home - carry them through the kitchen, living room, and other spaces, letting them sniff and explore new things while still being held. Walk them through your house multiple times before allowing them to explore on their own.

Carry them while you brush your teeth, fill your water glass, or even while you go up and down stairs. Hold them up to the sink and let them check out running water, reassuring them it's nothing to fear. Pick them up even when they're busy, just to say hello and give them a kiss. The more you hold them - even if they wiggle or act like they're not in the mood - the more they'll get used to it, come to accept it, and eventually love it. I constantly hold and "annoy" my kittens this way, but it's a habit that helps them grow into affectionate adult cats who love being picked up. This is something to continue doing throughout their whole life!

Many times a kitten will be temporarily annoyed that you picked them up, and may act like 'mommmmm (or dad!) I was in the middle of something!' - but if you hold them and pet them, offer them a treat, and give them lots of neck massages / cheek massages, they'll quickly melt and begin to purr. If not - that is fine! Give them a kiss and put them down, and try again and again and again throughout the day.

13. Allow Exploration After Bonding

Once the first week or two has passed and you've carried your kitten around the house, showing them everything, you can gradually start letting them explore on their own.

By this point, any adult cats or other pets in the home should be used to their presence too, making it a good time for introductions if they haven't met yet.

You'll know when your kitten is ready to roam based on your bond and trust level with them. I recommend waiting at least the full week / 7 days after bringing them home before letting them explore without carrying them. Carrying them around as you introduce them to the house teaches them that being held equals a fun adventure!

14. **Keeping them Safe**

You'll get a sense of when you can trust your kitten to be left alone, but generally, kittens are unpredictable for the first 6 - 8 months. During this period, it's essential to have a designated, safe space for them. This way, you can confidently leave them unsupervised without worrying about potential harm or damage.

Even once your kitten is comfortable being out and about, I strongly recommend keeping their space kitten-proofed for at least the first 6 months or longer. Kittens can cause a lot of mayhem when unsupervised, and they may accidentally get into dangerous situations, such as chewing on cords or accessing toxic substances. Having a safe, secure area for them to be in, especially when you're out grocery shopping, at work, going to socials, or even at home but totally distracted by cleaning/working/playing/napping/etc is invaluable for their safety.

15. **Tips for Kitten-Proofing**

Take the next few weeks to thoroughly kitten-proof your bedroom or designated kitten area. (See our go-home guide for more in depth kitten proofing and cleaning recommendations!)

- Block off under beds—use plastic partitions, towels, or cardboard to prevent kittens from getting stuck.
- Secure or hide any electronic cords within biting range. Use zip ties or other methods to keep cords out of reach.
- Ensure there's no space for them to squeeze under doors. This can be an issue in older homes.
- Remove any breakable items or knick-knacks.
- Provide safe climbing options, such as a **small** cat tree, so they have a designated space to explore without getting hurt.

16. **Positive Reinforcement and Training**

I'm a big advocate of setting animals up for success through proper training and reinforcement, especially during the first 6 months of their life! Introduce them to things regularly, and use positive reinforcement from the start to establish good behavior. The 'Kitten Lady' on YouTube also has excellent recommendations for kitten socialization and behavior tips!

17. **Encourage Socialization!** Invite guests over to meet your kitten after they've had at least two weeks to settle in and have explored the house with you and any immediate kids and family that live with you. Hosting a small gathering or movie night is a great way to introduce them to people. Have everyone arrive while kitten is in their dedicated room, and then carry kitten out and gently introduce them to everyone one by one, holding them and praising them and letting them sniff all the new people. Once they seem comfortable (put them back in their room for a half hour if they seem overwhelmed, then try again), you can pass them around for cuddles and kisses, and / or let them down, and have people engage them in playful interaction with their favorite toys. The more

you invest in socializing and bonding with your kitten, the more they will give back with affection and companionship!

18. Prepare Ahead for a Smooth Transition

Just think like a mischievous kitten and remove any potentially dangerous or chewable objects. Preparing your home ahead of time, or before introducing them to new things, ensures a smooth and relaxed transition once your kitten arrives. Kitten-proofing early on will allow you to focus on bonding and enjoying your new baby without worrying about their safety.

Thank you for taking the time to read this! I know it's a longer read, but I hope you find it helpful and can refer back to it as needed while preparing for your new kitten. Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any further questions!